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Progress Report No. 2

Clark Fork Superfund Sites

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Southwestern Montana — August 1988

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency &
Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences

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ISSUES OF INTEREST

Master Plan Develops Priorities

In the cooperative effort to improve the environment in the Clark Fork River Basin, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State of Montana have developed a plan for establishing priorities for study and action in the Basin.

EPA and the State have identified 77 potential contamination problems within the four Superfund sites in the Basin. Each problem represents part of a larger problem or **response action**[1] at a Superfund site. The four sites are the Milltown Reservoir site, the Anaconda Smelter site, the Montana Pole site, and the Silver Bow Creek site. For purposes of study and cleanup, the Butte Addition of the Silver Bow Creek site is being managed separately from the downstream portion of the site.

In order to manage the large number of complex, interrelated problems identified within the Clark Fork Superfund sites, EPA and the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (MDHES) have consolidated the 77 problem areas into 25 **"operable units."** These 25 operable units are subject to change as more information becomes available. An operable unit is a clearly defined, smaller portion of the overall work to be done at a Superfund site. Each operable unit is studied and addressed separately to provide the most effective cleanup.

EPA and MDHES have been setting priorities on Superfund work to be done throughout the Clark Fork River Basin. They have developed guidelines for establishing the order of work, and based on these guidelines, they have identified high, intermediate, and low priority operable units within the basin (see Table 1, page 3). The guidelines for setting priorities should ensure that the most serious or complex problems are dealt with first.

1. Words defined in the glossary at the end of this Progress Report appear in bold face type on first mention.

The proposed general guidelines for ranking operable units are presented below.

High Priority Operable Units:

- May have imminent health exposure (e.g., Walkerville).
- Have threat of imminent environmental damage (e.g., Warm Springs Ponds).
- Provide information needed for other operable units (e.g., mine flooding at Berkeley Pit).

Intermediate Priority Operable Units:

- Have long-term lower level health exposure (e.g., Anaconda Community Soils).
- Have potential threat of environmental damage (e.g., Silver Bow Creek Area 1).
- Have potential to contaminate other operable units located downstream, down gradient, or down wind (e.g., Streamside Tailings).
- Have unusually complex problems requiring in-depth investigation (e.g., Smelter Hill).

Low Priority Operable Units:

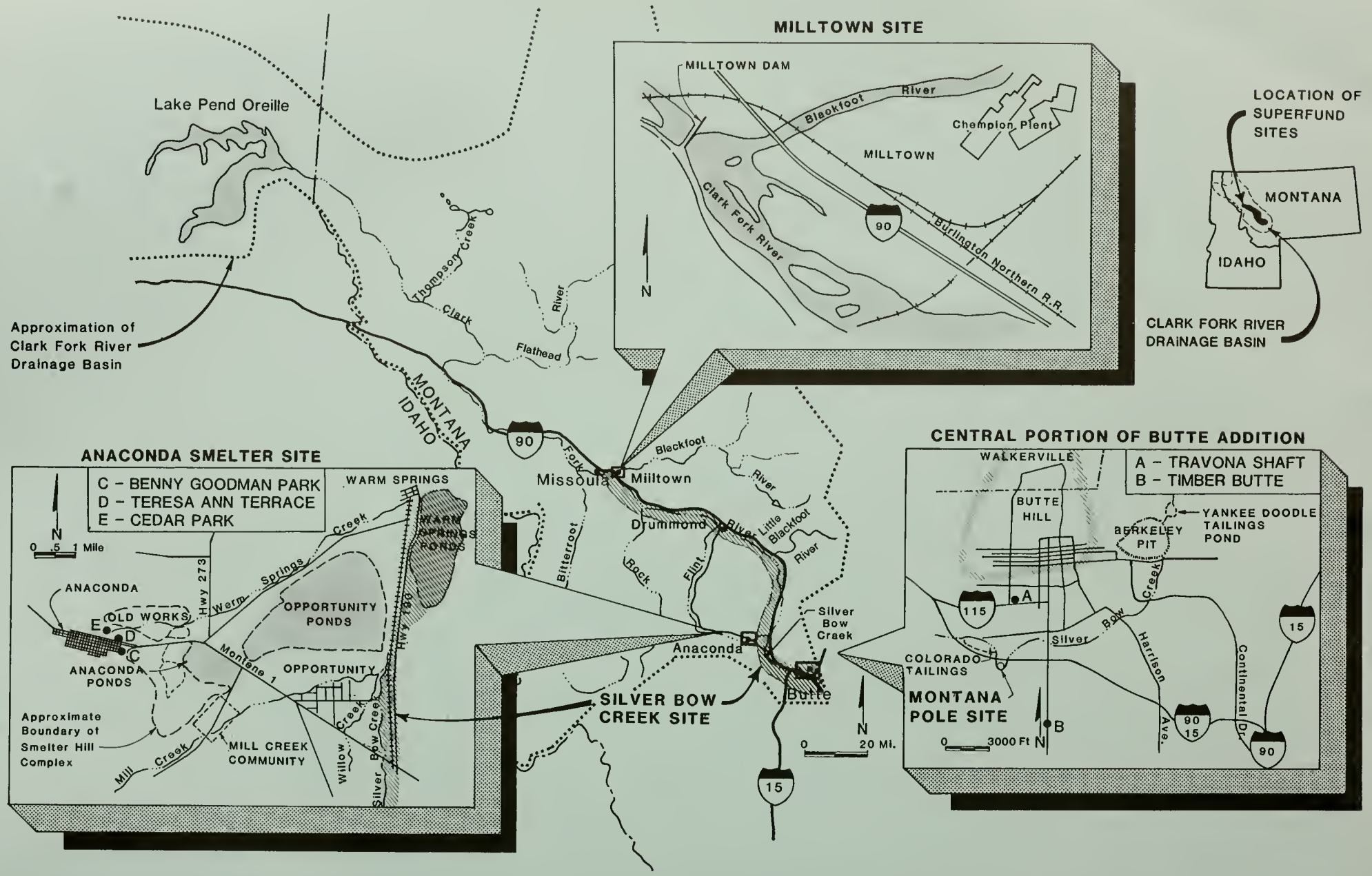
- Have potential for low-level human health exposure (e.g., agricultural lands).
- Have potential for low-level environmental damage (e.g., active mine area).
- Have low present impact but potential for increased health or environmental damage (e.g., Opportunity Ponds).
- Have low potential for off-site contamination (e.g., Arbiter).

NOTE: The Clark Fork Progress Report provides a periodic overview of Superfund activities and important documents in the study and cleanup of the Clark Fork River Basin. These Reports include information on issues of interest, plans and progress at Clark Fork sites, upcoming meetings, ways to obtain further information, and a glossary of Superfund terms.

Specific questions about these activities should be directed to Bob Fox at the Montana EPA office, 301 South Park, Helena, Montana 59626; phone: (406) 449-5414; or contact Janie Stiles, Public Information Officer, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Cogswell Building, Helena, Montana 59620; phone: 444-2821 or 1-800-648-8465 (toll-free in-state).

Public involvement is an important part of the Superfund process and is encouraged by Superfund personnel. EPA and MDHES encourage residents to offer suggestions for information to include and issues to cover in the Progress Reports.

PLEASE RETURN



SUPERFUND SITES IN THE CLARK FORK RIVER BASIN

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TABLE 1.
PROPOSED LIST OF PRIORITIES OF CLARK FORK OPERABLE UNITS

HIGH PRIORITY OPERABLE UNITS

Operable Unit

Mill Creek
Walkerville
Butte Priority Soils
Old Works Removal
Flue Dust
Warm Springs Ponds
Travona Flooding
Montana Pole
Mine Flooding (Berkeley Pit)
Rocker

INTERMEDIATE PRIORITY OPERABLE UNITS

SBC Area I (Metro Storm Drain to Colorado Tailings)
Streambank Tailings (Colorado Tailings to Warm Springs Ponds)
Smelter Hill
Clark Fork River
Milltown Reservoir
Anaconda Community Soils
Anaconda Site-wide Ground Water
Old Works (General)

LOW PRIORITY OPERABLE UNITS

Butte Non-Priority Soils
Opportunity Ponds
Arbiter
Smelter Wastes (Beryllium, Slag)
Anaconda Surface Water and Sediment
Agricultural Lands
Active Mine Area

*Work on operable units shown in boldface has begun; this includes all high priority and most intermediate priority operable units.

Certain other factors such as local interest and available resources may be considered in ranking operable units on a case-by-case basis.

In general, these guidelines will determine the priorities for action for all operable units within the Clark Fork Superfund sites. The categories of high, intermediate, and low priority are meant to be general. These guidelines will be valuable in directing Superfund action toward the most serious human health or environmental problems in the basin.

Although it is not possible at this time to establish detailed schedules for the entire range of Superfund activities in the basin, EPA has developed a general plan for projected Superfund activities over the next six-year period. The bar graph in Figure 1, page 4, provides a general schedule of projected activities. The figure shows the investigations, interim cleanup, and final cleanup actions that may occur over the next several years. A key point to note is that approximately 75 percent of the identified problems are already under investigation. The intent of the schedule is to show the pace of progress in the next several years if agency funding and personnel are maintained and if the responsible parties continue to participate and cooperate with the program.

This process for setting priorities is an important part of EPA's and MDHES's ongoing Master Plan effort. The Master Plan effort is actually a continuing process that will track problems at the affected sites, their effects on each other, and schedules for dealing with the problems. To document this phase of the process, EPA and MDHES plan to issue a Master Plan document in early fall that will present schedules for activities through 1989 and projected activities through 1994. For further information on the process for setting priorities, the public may obtain copies of a briefing package on it that EPA has placed in the information repositories listed at the end of this Progress Report.

PUBLIC INVITED TO UPCOMING MEETINGS

EPA and MDHES plan to hold several meetings on Superfund activities during the next few months. Exact times and locations will be announced in local newspapers. Residents and other interested parties are encouraged to attend these meetings. Meetings that are currently planned are listed below. Dates to be announced.

BUTTE ADDITION

EPA will hold meetings on the response action planned for the West Camp (Travona) mine flooding problem and on the work plan for the Berkeley Pit RI/FS.

EPA outlines studies to protect health

A top priority at any Superfund site is to protect human health, which is a major focus of many of the studies and actions now in progress in the Clark Fork Basin. For example, EPA has completed screening studies and soil removals in Walkerville. Other potential human health impacts and the need for permanent remedies will be evaluated in the Butte Priority Soils Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS).

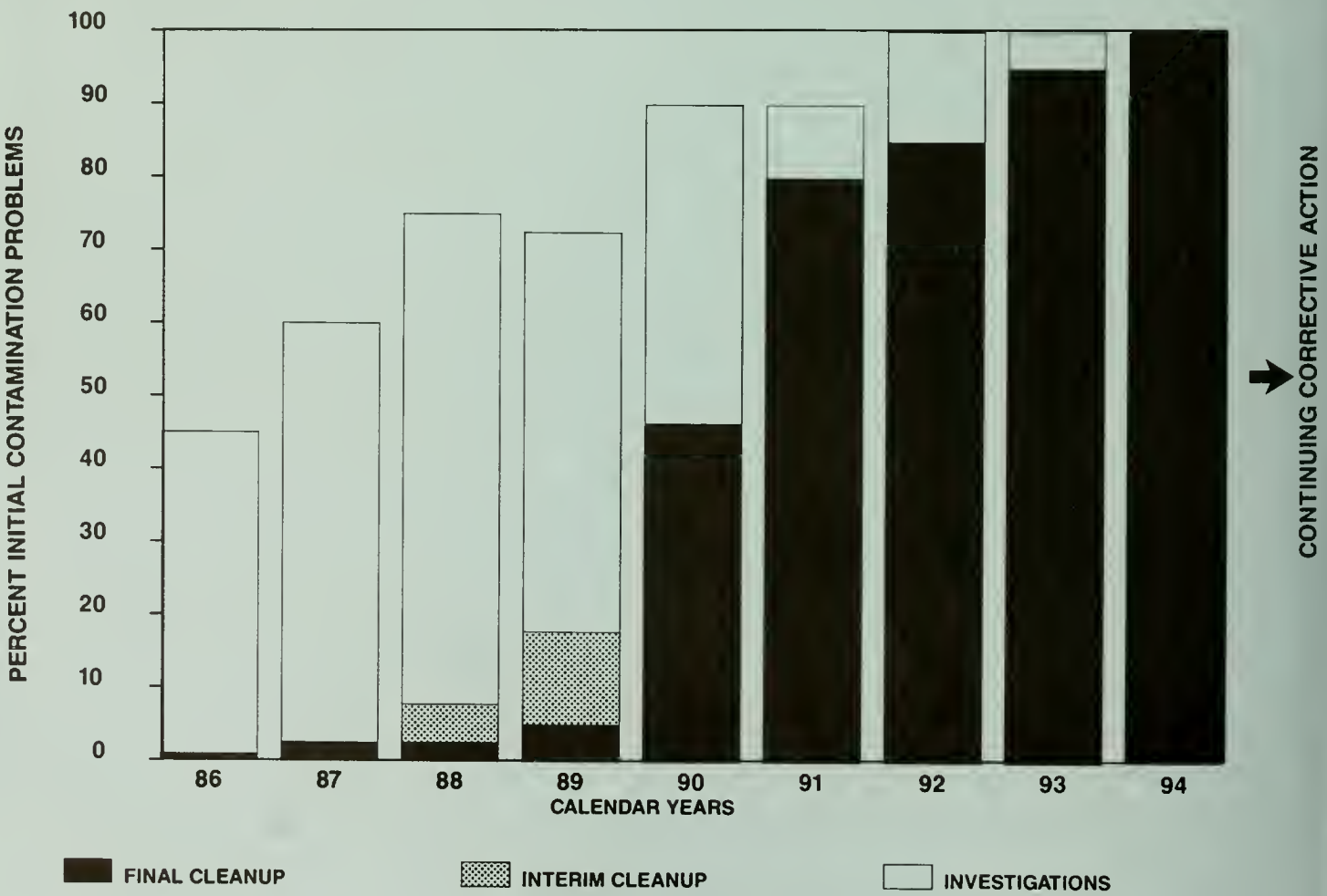
In addition, EPA has nearly completed the screening for human health impacts at Anaconda and its neighboring communities. The MDHES has evaluated human health impacts from many water supplies along the Clark Fork River and is conducting initial screening studies at Rocker and Ramsay. In general, the data indicated that emergency soil removal actions are not necessary in Anaconda. However, some non-time critical interim cleanup which focuses on specific problems in Anaconda may be undertaken. EPA will keep the community informed if the need for such action develops.

The primary purpose of these studies will be to define the types, amounts, and locations of all contaminants. During the follow-up Remedial Investigation, an Endangerment Assessment will evaluate all human health risks from the contamination. People might be at risk from soil ingestion, inhalation of contaminants in air (indoor and outdoor), and ingestion of contaminants in drinking water. As a part of the studies, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia may conduct a health assessment to help determine human health risks in communities in the upper Clark Fork River Basin.

Silver Bow Creek Reclassified

On May 20, 1988, the Montana Board of Health and Environmental Sciences upgraded and reclassified Silver Bow Creek from an "E" stream to an "I" stream. The former "E" class did not meet EPA's minimum requirement for "fishable" and "swimmable" uses. The "I" class designates fishable and swimmable goals and replaces the "E" class for some streams, including Silver Bow Creek. Future Clark Fork Progress Reports will include more information on this topic.

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Schedule of Projected Superfund Activities



EPA and MDHES REPORT RECENT PROGRESS AND PLANS

MDHES Reports on Four Silver Bow Creek Studies

The three major studies in progress on the Silver Bow Creek site are the Warm Springs Ponds studies, the Streambanks Tailings and Revegetation Study, and the Public Health and Environmental Assessment. The Flood Modeling Study is being completed.

Study assesses Warm Springs Ponds system

MDHES is currently preparing a Feasibility Study on the Warm Springs Ponds to address a range of problems, as listed below.

1) Potential failure of the ponds in the event of a major flood or earthquake.
2) Fish kills in the Mill-Willow Bypass.
3) Gradual erosion of the banks of the Mill-Willow Bypass.
4) Contamination of nearby ground water.
5) Direct human contact with contaminants.
6) Contaminants going through the system into the Clark Fork River.

The Feasibility Study report will present and evaluate options for stabilizing the pond system, reducing surface water and ground water contamination associated with the ponds, and reducing the potential for human exposure to contaminants. When it has been completed this fall, this report will be subject to a 30-day public review and comment period.

MDHES evaluates in-place remedies on Silver Bow Creek

Metal-laden tailings deposited within the floodplain of Silver Bow Creek and the Clark Fork River during the century of mining in the area are often toxic to plant life and are known to contaminate ground water and surface water. The goal of the MDHES Streambank Tailings and Revegetation Study is to develop and evaluate new techniques that can modify the tailings to reduce their toxicity. MDHES is evaluating the potential for treating contaminated soils and then planting hardy vegetation, primarily grasses, adapted to acid soils with high metals concentrations.

Renewal of plant life along Silver Bow Creek is important not only visually, but also because plants will help keep the metals from washing downstream during high water and from migrating down into the ground water. Furthermore, plant growth will help keep the tailings from being blown by wind. After the greenhouse studies have been completed, contractors working for MDHES will seed test plots along Silver Bow Creek this fall.

Flood Modeling Study nearing completion

MDHES is completing a draft of the Silver Bow Creek Flood Modeling Study. Historical information about rainfall and floods has been used to help MDHES evaluate the impact a high flow or flood would have on tailings along Silver Bow Creek and sediments in the Warm Springs Ponds. When the report has been finalized, it will be available at the Silver Bow Creek site repositories listed on page 8 in this Progress Report.

Public Health and Environmental Assessment underway

MDHES and EPA are currently compiling information for the Public Health and Environmental Assessment for the Silver Bow Creek site. This report, which is similar to an Endangerment Assessment will ascertain whether there is a public health or environmental risk at the site. If so, this Assessment will describe how the contaminants may cause these risks. As part of this effort, information will be gathered in Ramsay and Rocker, concentrating primarily on those areas used most by people, such as playgrounds and residential yards. A draft of this report is expected in November this year for public review.

MDHES begins field studies at Milltown Reservoir

MDHES began a downstream screening study in late June to help MDHES and EPA determine whether contamination has gone beyond the Milltown dam in surface or ground waters. MDHES will collect river and sediment samples downstream of the dam at intervals to the confluence of the Bitterroot River. Ground water samples will be collected from wells near the dam to determine if arsenic or other metals are migrating down gradient from the reservoir. MDHES has selected an environmental consulting firm to conduct the downstream screening study, which will continue through the summer of 1988. The feasibility study will be done by the consultant or the responsible party.

Montana Power Company was scheduled to begin Phase II of the dam rehabilitation project this summer as well. **Drawdown** of the reservoir water level, the first step in dam reconstruction, began on June 27. MDHES is collecting water samples daily from the Clark Fork River above and below the reservoir to determine the effect of the drawdown upon metals concentration and sediment load in the surface water.

EPA DESCRIBES BUTTE ADDITION PROGRESS

The focus at the Butte Addition includes mine flooding issues related to the Berkeley Pit and the Travona Shaft, planning for the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study on contaminated soils, and removal actions in Walkerville and at the Timber Butte Mill.

Efforts to Avert Mine Flooding Underway

EPA and MDHES are concerned about the rising water in the Berkeley Pit because contaminated mine water may eventually seep into the shallow ground water or be discharged via surface drainage to Silver Bow Creek. By late 1988 or early 1989, EPA plans to initiate a study regarding the pit and related mine flooding. This study will develop alternatives for preventing possible flooding and the spread of contaminated mine water. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the plans prior to initiation of the study. EPA will provide information about a public meeting to local newspapers and radio and TV stations.

EPA is investigating another potential flooding problem in an area of Butte known as the "West Camp" near the Travona Shaft (see map). As the mine water level rises in this area, the potential for spread of metals into Silver Bow Creek and the adjacent alluvial ground water increases. However, data from the Travona and Emma shafts and an observation well in the area show that during the past three months, the rate of water level rise has slowed significantly.

EPA completed an **Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis** on the Travona shaft during July 1988. The analysis indicated that it would be appropriate for EPA to continue to monitor the rising mine water in the area and be prepared to conduct an **Expedited Response Action** if necessary to prevent contamination of the shallow ground water and Silver Bow Creek. This action would be compatible with whatever final long-term remedy is implemented after the more comprehensive study that will follow. The Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis will be placed in the Butte information repositories listed on page 8, and EPA encourages residents to read and comment on the report. EPA will hold a public meeting in August on the proposed Travona action. The time and location of the meeting will be announced by area newspapers, radio, and TV stations.

Soils Screening Study helps to set priorities

In May 1988, EPA and MDHES completed the Butte area soils screening study that was initiated during the summer of 1987. The full report is available for review at Butte area information repositories. In general, the study showed metals levels to be highest at old mill sites and mine waste dumps. Residences located near mine wastes tended to have higher levels of metals than those located on the flats, or even than those on Butte Hill that are somewhat removed from old mining operations. EPA has prepared a project summary of the soils screening study. Interested residents may obtain a copy by contacting Sara Weinstock, EPA Remedial Project Manager, or Janie Stiles, MDHES Superfund Public Information Officer, at the addresses shown on page 8 of this Progress Report.

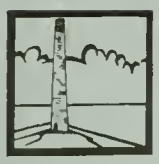
Walkerville Removal Completed; Timber Butte Evaluation Underway

The two-part Walkerville Removal has been completed. For one part of the removal, the EPA Emergency Response Branch (removal team) has completed the **Removal Action** begun in Walkerville during April 1988. While mercury vapor did not appear to be a significant problem during tests conducted in 1987, more recent tests revealed that some residences with unexcavated basements in the Walkerville area did contain mercury vapor. Therefore, the removal team excavated basements and built new walls in seven homes where elevated levels of lead and mercury vapor were found.

The removal team also removed soils containing elevated levels of metals located at or adjacent to 22 residences. These materials were removed and stabilized so they cannot be spread by wind or water erosion back into residential areas.

For the other part of the removal, the responsible parties, including Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), New Butte Mining, and the City of Walkerville, have completed the majority of their work in removing and regrading several old dumps. The areas will be reseeded and fenced to protect and maintain new vegetation and soil cover over the dumps.

The removal team has also begun to follow up on results of the Soils Screening Study that show very high levels of lead at the Timber Butte Mill. EPA collected air and soil samples at or near the mill property and is now evaluating analytical results of the sampling. After all test results have been evaluated, the removal team may begin work on a removal action at the mill some time during August.



EPA Reports Anaconda Smelter Progress

Activities underway at the Anaconda Smelter site are the Mill Creek relocation, the community soils screening study, the flue dust pilot study, and negotiation of other work.

Mill Creek relocation to proceed

During the past several years, EPA conducted extensive studies at Mill Creek which indicated that elevated levels of metals were present in the community. An endangerment assessment performed by EPA in April 1986 showed that young children in Mill Creek were at risk of exposure to arsenic. In response, EPA temporarily relocated families with small children. Urinary arsenic levels of children in these families have since dropped to normal levels.

Further study at Mill Creek indicated that all Mill Creek residents should be relocated away from the contaminated homesites. Of the original thirty-six families in the community, all but seven families have been relocated. Negotiations are underway between ARCO and these residents concerning property purchase and relocation.

Other activities reported

During September 1987, EPA conducted a soils screening study in several communities near the Anaconda Smelter site that supplements earlier ARCO studies. Approximately 40 residential yards, parks, and public play areas were sampled. As soon as the data can be verified, EPA will release results of the studies to individual property owners and hold a public meeting to discuss the results.

ARCO has recently completed a flue dust reprocessing pilot study. Results of the study indicate that innovative technology being looked at by ARCO may be a potential remedy for the flue dust problem. Additional testing will be required in the flue dust Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

Work plans being negotiated

EPA and ARCO are negotiating work plans for studies covering the three areas at the Anaconda Smelter site listed below.

1. **Smelter Hill:** soil contamination, higher contamination level waste piles, demolition dumps, ground water, and toxic effects on plants;

2. **Old Works:** streamside wastes, toxic waste piles, and neighborhood soils studies, including Teresa Ann Terrace, Cedar Park, and Benny Goodman Park; and

3. **Flue Dust:** evaluation of potential cleanup and disposal.

A general work plan is being negotiated, which will facilitate these and all subsequent studies at the Anaconda Smelter site. This "umbrella" plan will serve to organize and expedite studies at the site.

EPA's removal team transfers work at Montana Pole

Over the past several years, EPA's removal team has worked at Montana Pole in Butte to contain contaminants that presented the most immediate threat to public health and the environment. The removal team excavated highly contaminated soils and placed them in temporary storage on-site within five steel buildings. In addition, an oil recovery system was constructed to prevent movement of contaminated ground water into nearby Silver Bow Creek.

MDHES, through a cooperative agreement with EPA, will assume management of the recovery system and will begin the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study late this summer. Final treatment methods for contaminated soils and ground water will be selected after completion of the feasibility study. MDHES has selected an environmental consulting firm to assist with development of work plans and the conduct of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study.

FOR MORE INFORMATION. . .

INFORMATION REPOSITORIES have been established for each of the Superfund sites in the Clark Fork River Basin. These repositories include key documents describing Superfund activities at sites nearby. Only the EPA and MDHES offices in Helena have all of the Montana Superfund documents. EPA encourages residents to review these documents at the public locations listed below.

Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology Library
West Park Street
Butte, Montana 59701 406/496-4281
(Includes materials on Butte Addition, Silver Bow Creek, and Montana Pole)

Butte-Silver Bow Library
106 West Broadway
Butte, Montana 59701 406/723-8262
(Includes materials on Butte Addition and Silver Bow Creek)

Hearst Free Library
Fourth and Main Streets
Anaconda, Montana 59711 406/563-9990
(Includes materials on Anaconda Smelter and Silver Bow Creek)

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site
Division of the National Park Service
316 Main Street
Deerlodge, Montana 59722 406/846-2070
(Includes materials on Silver Bow Creek)

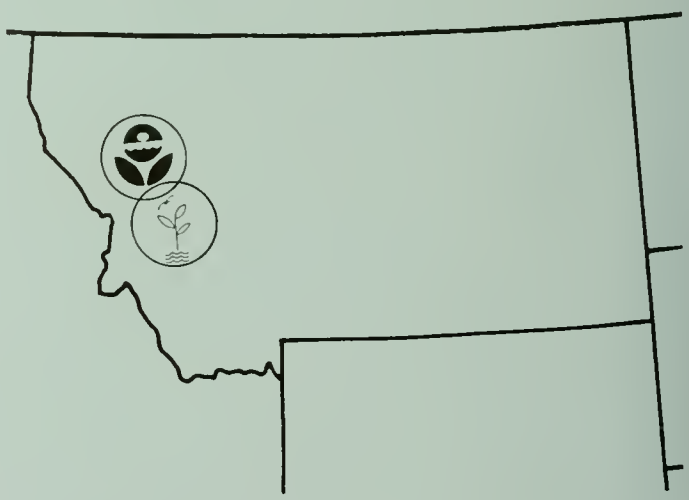
Mansfield Library
University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59812 406/721-2665
(Includes materials on Silver Bow Creek and Butte Addition)

Bonner School Library
Highway 200
Bonner, Montana 59823 406/258-6151
(Includes materials on the Milltown Reservoir site)

Montana Department of Health & Environment Sciences
Solid & Hazardous Waste Bureau
B201 Cogswell Building
Helena, Montana 59620 406/444-2957
or toll-free 1-800/648-8465
(Includes materials on all Montana Superfund sites)

Environmental Protection Agency
Montana Office
Room 292, Federal Building
301 South Park
Helena, Montana 59626 406/449-5414
(Includes materials on all Montana Superfund sites)

Progress Reports and other publications about the Superfund sites are available on a regular basis. If you wish to receive this Progress Report and/or similar publications on other sites, please use the coupon on page 9 to assure that you are included on the mailing list.



OFFICIAL CONTACTS: If you have any questions or comments, or would like further information on specific sites, please contact the following individuals:

MDHES:
Janie Stiles
Public Information Officer
Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences
B201 Cogswell Building
Helena, Montana 59620
1-800/648-8465 (toll-free in-state) or
406/444-2821

MONTANA EPA OFFICE
Bob Fox
Clark Fork Coordinator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Room 292, Federal Building
301 South Park
Helena, Montana 59626 406/449-5414

REGIONAL EPA OFFICE
Mike Holmes
On-scene Coordinator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
999 18th Street
Denver, CO 80202 303/294-7080

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS
MDHES HOTLINE: 1-800/648-8465
MDHES: 406/444-2821
EPA, MONTANA OFFICE: 406/449-5414

Site-specific questions may be directed to the following project personnel at the indicated MDHES or EPA phone numbers or the addresses shown above.

Superfund Activity	Lead Agency	Contact
Walkerville, Timber Butte	EPA, Denver	Mike Holmes 303/294-7080
	EPA, Helena	Sara Weinstock 406/449-5414
Silver Bow Creek	MDHES	Kathy DeMarinis 406/444-2821
Montana Pole	MDHES	Doug Rogness 406/444-2821
Butte Addition to Silver Bow Creek	EPA, Helena	Russ Forba 406/449-5414
Anaconda Smelter including Mill Creek	EPA, Helena	Mike Bishop 406/449-5414
Milltown Reservoir	MDHES	Phil Hertzog 406/444-2821

MAILING LIST ADDITIONS

If you wish to be added to one of the site-specific mailing lists, please check the appropriate box or boxes, complete the form below, and return to:

Janie Stiles
Public Information Officer
Montana Department of Health
and Environmental Sciences
B201 Cogswell Building
Helena, Montana 59620

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

Please include me on the mailing list for the sites checked below:*

____ ANACONDA SMELTER, INCLUDING MILL CREEK

____ BUTTE ADDITION TO SILVER BOW CREEK

____ CLARK FORK BASIN

____ MILLTOWN RESERVOIR

____ MONTANA POLE

____ SILVER BOW CREEK

____ WALKERVILLE REMOVAL ACTION

*To avoid double mailings, do not check boxes for sites that already send you information.

Suggestions on information you would like to see covered in the Clark Fork Progress Report:

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GLOSSARY OF SUPERFUND TERMS

This Progress Report and others you will receive contain Superfund and technical terms that may be unfamiliar to you. Some of these terms are defined below. Additional terms will be defined as they appear in future issues.

Administrative Order on Consent: A legal and enforceable agreement signed between EPA and potentially responsible parties (PRPs) whereby PRPs agree to perform a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (see definition below) or a removal action. The agreement describes actions to be taken at a site and may be subject to a public comment period. Unlike a consent decree, an administrative order on consent does not have to be approved by a judge.

Drawdown: The lowering of a reservoir's water level due to withdrawal of water.

Endangerment Assessment: A study conducted as part of a Remedial Investigation that defines the risks posed to public health and/or the environment at a Superfund site.

Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA): A study conducted during an expedited response action (see next definition) to develop and design the solution to a particular problem at a site and to make detailed cost projections.

Expedited Response Action (ERA): Implementation, on an accelerated schedule, of a solution to a particular, well-defined problem at a site. An ERA does not have the urgency of a removal action, but it is done on a quicker schedule than a remedial action. An ERA must be compatible with the final remedial action.

Ground water: Water that fills the spaces between soil, sand, rock, and gravel particles beneath the Earth's surface.

Operable Unit (OU): A portion of an overall study and cleanup at a Superfund site. For example, EPA has identified management of contamination in the Mill Creek community at the Anaconda Smelter site as an operable unit of that site. During the course of a cleanup, a site may need to be divided into a number of operable units.

Remedial Action: Implementation of a permanent solution to a health or environmental problem after study at a Superfund site.

Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS): Two different but related studies at a Superfund site. They are intended to:

- Gather the information necessary to identify the types, locations, and amounts of contamination at a Superfund site.
- Establish criteria for cleaning up the site.
- Identify and screen alternatives for remedial action.
- Analyze in detail the technology and costs of the alternatives.

Removal Action: An action taken over the short-term to address a release or threatened release of hazardous substances. For example, removal of contaminated soils in Walkerville was a Removal Action.

Response action: Any action taken at a Superfund site; includes remedial and removal actions.

Responsible party: An individual, company, or government body identified as liable for release of hazardous substances to the environment. Under the Superfund program, EPA may hold liable any party that has produced, shipped, stored, processed, or handled hazardous wastes, or owned land on which these activities have been conducted.

Tailings: Fine, sandy material that is a by-product from ore milling operations.